

CONSUMER HIGHLIGHTS



DECEMBER 2000



CONTENTS

DECEMBER CALENDAR
FCE NEWS

CANDLES ARE A BURNING ISSUE.....	2
TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PINE CONES.....	2
HOLIDAY HOTLINES.....	2
COLORFUL PINE CONES.....	3
THE TWELVE STAINS OF CHRISTMAS.....	3
PLANTS HAVE SIGNIFICANCE DURING THE HOLIDAYS.....	4
GARDENER'S CORNER.....	5
QUICK FRUITCAKE.....	7
CASHEW BRITTLE.....	7
CASHEW CHICKEN CASSEROLE.....	7

CANDLES ARE A BURNING ISSUE **Holiday Safety Precautions**

Candles give the holiday table a special glow, but some special precautions are in order. Always burn candles on protected, heat-resistant surfaces. Avoid putting them in the way of a draft, as this will cause rapid, uneven burning and excess dripping. Keep them away from anything flammable. When they burn down to within two inches of the holder or the decorations, they should be extinguished. When grouping candles together, place them at least three inches apart so they do not melt one another.

Refrigerate candles before you use them so they will burn more slowly. Be sure to wrap them in foil or plastic so the wicks will not absorb moisture during refrigeration.

Before lighting, clean and trim candle wicks to one-quarter inch. Long or crooked wicks can cause uneven burning or excessive dripping. If a candle has been used previously, clean it with a piece of nylon or soft cloth. Maximum burning time for a candle at one setting should be no more than one hour for every inch of its diameter. Never leave a burning candle unattended. Do not extinguish candles with water, as it can cause the hot wax to splatter and may cause some candle containers to break.

Family and Consumer
Sciences Hotline



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PINE CONES

Before working with the pine cones, condition them in the oven. You don't have to do it, but heating them first melts the sap and as a result adds a nice glaze to the pine cones. Also, pine cones that are not opened, will open in the heat. (If you make a decoration for outside, the opened pine cones may close again in a wet humid climate) so, use an old cookie sheet or cover a sheet with foil. Place the pine cones on it and put it in oven. Bake them at about 200 degrees until the sap is melted and the pine cones are open. Test first with one pine cone to get the right temp. As an added bonus, your house will be smelling wonderful.

HOLIDAY HOTLINES

Holiday Hotlines offer lots of helpful cooking tips. For assistance call:

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline
1-800-535-4555

Land O'Lakes –
1-800-782-9606

Butterball Turkey Talk-Line –
(Nov. 1 – Dec. 22nd only)
1-800-323-4848

For hearing impaired call –
1-800-833-3848

Nutra Sweet and Equal
1-800-323-5316

Sweet 'N Low – 1-800-221-1763

COLORFUL PINE CONES

Using natural materials to decorate for Thanksgiving and Christmas can save money and bring the beauty of the outdoors inside. If you want something a little different for your decorations, try bleaching or dyeing pine cones.

Bleaching: Fill a 5-gallon bucket half-full of water. Fill the rest of the way with liquid chlorine bleach. (Use the cheapest, kind of bleach). Add the pine cones. Place a rack or similar object on top of the pine cones to keep them submerged. Soak them for about 6 hours to overnight until the pine cones are the color you want. Remove the cones from the solution. Rinse them. Spread them out to dry. They will close when wet, but they reopen when dried.

If you leave the cones in for only a few hours, more can be added after the first ones are removed. However, the bleaching process will stop after about eight to ten hours as the chlorine evaporates and you only have water left.

The cones should be a golden color. This soaking usually removes the dirt and resin.

Dyeing: Pine cones can be dyed to add color to your wreath or fireside basket. The colors are soft.. not bright as when they are spray painted.

Bleach the pine cones as directed above. Dry. Mix one package of fabric dye in 1 gallon of hot water. (Use any color you like.) Red, green, blue, and yellow work well). Heat to a simmer. Put the pine cones into the hot dye solution. Put a weight on top of the pine cones to keep them submerged.

Leave the cones in the hot dye solution for 20 to 30 minutes. They will close up. Spread the cones on layers of newspapers to dry and open again.

Put in the finished pine cones in a wooden bowl or basket and tuck small bows among them.

The Alabama Cooperative
Extension Service

THE TWELVE STAINS OF CHRISTMAS

'Tis the season for entertaining, and with the tinsel and merriment come spills and stains. Try these tips to handle every drip and drizzle of the Twelve Stains of Christmas.

12 candles dripping

Scrape off excess wax with a dull knife. Place stain between paper towels. Press with warm iron from back of fabric. Then, place stain face down on clean paper towels and sponge with a dry-cleaning solvent. Air-dry and launder as usual. If traces of color remain, launder again using color-safe bleach according to fabric instructions.

11 aunties kissing

To remove lipstick, scrape fabric stain with a dull knife. Use a dry-cleaning solvent or pre-treat with detergent or stain treatment. Wash in warm water. Air dry.

10 chocolates melting

Pre-treat with a liquid laundry detergent containing enzymes. Difficult stains may require using a bleach safe for the garment.



9 toasts a-tipping

To remove wine, rinse in cold water to dilute stain. Soak up to 30 minutes in detergent, weighted with a towel to keep submerged. Launder in hottest water safe for fabric and color, Air-dry and repeat if necessary.

8 hosts perspiring

Dampen stain with warm water and rub with bar soap. Launder in hot water with chlorine bleach, if safe for fabric. Note: If perspiration has changed the color of a fabric, apply ammonia to fresh stains or vinegar to old stains and rinse. Launder in the hottest water safe for fabric and color.

7 fruits a-falling

Rinse in cold water to dilute stain. Soak up to 30 minutes in detergent, weighted with a towel to keep submerged. Launder in warm water. Air-dry and repeat if necessary.

6 cups of coffee, tea or pop

To remove coffee, tea or soda pop, sponge or rinse stain promptly in cold water. Pre-treat with liquid laundry detergent, launder using bleach (Chlorine or color-safe) and hottest water safe for fabric.

5 candy canes

To remove colored candy stains, rinse in warm water to dilute stain. Wash in warm to hot water and dry as usual.

4 meat slices

To remove grease or cooking oil, use a dry-cleaning solvent or pre-treat with a laundry product by rubbing into stain until saturated. Wash in warm to hot water. Air-dry and repeat if necessary.

3 trees a-tipping

To remove tree sap, use dry-cleaning solvent and then wash in detergent in warm to hot water. Dry and repeat if necessary.

2 upset egg nogs

To remove milk or other dairy products, rinse in cold water to dilute stain. Soak up to 30 minutes with detergent, weighted with a towel to keep submerged. Wash in warm to hot water and air-dry.

And 1 gravy boat splashing 'round

Scrape off excess with a dull knife if dried. Pre-treat: 1) soak with a laundry product containing enzymes or 2) rub with liquid laundry detergent or paste of powder laundry detergent and water. Launder and dry as usual.

Whirlpool Home Appliances

PLANTS HAVE SIGNIFICANCE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

All of us have grown up, associating certain plants with the holiday season - mistletoe, poinsettia, holly and, of course, the Christmas tree. But have you wondered how these plants achieved such distinction? The history, symbolic meaning and legends of these plants are interesting.

The **Christmas tree**, for instance, decorated and lighted in virtually every Christian home during the Christmas season, is said to date back to the eighth century. St. Winifred, missionary to the Scandinavians, supposedly chopped down a large oak, and as the tree fell, it left a tiny fir tree unharmed in its path. After seeing how unblemished the tree was among the debris of the huge oak, Sir Winifred proclaimed to the towns people that the

tree should be a symbol to represent endless life. Its branches point to heaven and stay ever green and full of life. He called this fir the tree of the Christ child and advised all townspeople to cut a fir tree, take it into their homes, gather around it and celebrate the birth night of Christ. "Use it to shelter loving gifts and acts of kindness and brotherhood," he said. This idea of placing gifts under a tree is still strong today.

The **pine Christmas tree** was introduced in England during the reign of Queen Victoria. She decreed that a tree be brought to the palace and decorated each year for the Christmas season. Candles were placed on the tree to symbolize the Light of the World, and gifts were exchanged as reminders of all gifts from above.

Just how **mistletoe** became associated with kissing during the holiday season is a mystery, but it's thought to be based on a Scandinavian legend. It seems Balder, a Scandinavian god, was struck down by Loki, an evil spirit, using an arrow made from mistletoe. Seeing the attack, Frigga, the mother of Balder, declared that the plant must never again serve as a symbol of mischief. Frigga, being the goddess of love and beauty, is said to have kissed anyone passing under the mistletoe. One mistletoe custom calls for the boy to remove a berry from a mistletoe plant and give it to the girl after a kiss. When no berries are left, the mistletoe loses its spell and no more kisses are available.

Holly, being evergreen, is said to symbolize everlasting life. The prickly leaves symbolize the crown of thorns, and the berries are said to have been white before the crucifixion, but turned

crimson like drops of blood afterward. Holly was a sacred plant of the Druids in ancient Britain.

Our present day **poinsettia plant** was no more than a weed growing wild in Mexico when it was discovered by Joel Poinsett and brought to this country in 1836. In fact, by the time Poinsett got to the plant, Mexicans had been collecting the prized flowers for years and decorating their mantels with them as symbols of the star of Bethlehem.

Family and Consumer
Sciences



GARDENER'S CORNER

As the holiday season approaches, our priorities often change from gardening to other activities. For anyone who has some free time, or simply needs to get out of the house for a while, here are some suggestions.

?Consider leaf removal from the lawn if a heavy layer has collected. A few leaves lying on the grass surface would probably not cause problems. On the other hand, a heavy accumulation can cause the retention of excessive moisture on live grass stems during the winter. Such an environment is ideal for the infection of stems by fungal organisms. Remove excess leaves by raking, blowing or by using a bagger on the mower. Keep them on your property by using them as mulch or by composting.

?There is still time to plant some species of the winter vegetables and cool season flowers. China Doll carnations, Foxglove, Pansy, Petunia, Shasta Daisy and Snapdragon can be transplanted to prepared beds in December.

In the vegetable garden plant beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, leek, mustard, bulbing and bunching onions, parsley and radish. When available, some of these can be started as transplants.

?This is a good time for transplanting woody trees and shrubs.

?Move tender tropical and subtropical potted plants inside. Some species can be damaged even at temperatures a few degrees above freezing.

Goodbye Shawn, and Good Luck!



Shawn Brown, our excellent Santa Rosa County Horticultural Technician has left us. We will miss him greatly, as he has provided excellent information and services over the past 2½ years. He will be teaching environmental sciences at Navarre High School.

We expect to hire another person for this position within the next 2 months. Be patient with us during the period of transition and training of a new person.

Jay Office Now Open

The Extension office at Jay opened at a new location on September 27. We have nice facilities and more room, which was desperately needed.

Located just behind the Jay City Hall, our office is a part of the Jay Community Center. There is a conference room and a 4,000 square foot meeting room. When in the area, stop by and see the new building.

Wildlife Food Plot Management Shortcourse



We are offering a special educational program for game managers, hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts on Friday afternoon, December 1, at the new Jay office. Topics will include deer biology and habits, habitat diversity for wildlife, forage plant selection, food plot establishment and maintenance and carcass disposal.

The program begins at 12:00 noon and continues until 5:00 p.m. Contact the Santa Rosa County Extension office in Milton or Jay for registration and additional information.



Have a safe and happy holiday!

Dan Mullins
Horticultural Agent

RECIPES

QUICK FRUITCAKE

- 1 pkg. (15.6 oz.) cranberry *or* blueberry quick bread mix
- ½ c. chopped pecans
- ½ c. raisins *or* chopped dates
- ¼ c. chopped maraschino cherries
- ¼ c. crushed pineapple, drained

Prepare quick bread batter according to package directions. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Pour into a greased 9-in. x 5-in. x 3-in. loaf pan. Bake at 350° for 55-60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack.

Yield: 1 loaf.

CASHEW BRITTLE **Ready in 30 minutes or less**

- 1 c. sugar
- ½ c. light corn syrup
- 1 to 1½ c. salted cashew halves
- 1 tsp. butter (no substitutes)
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

In a microwave-safe bowl, combine the sugar and corn syrup. Microwave, uncovered, on high for 4 minutes; stir. Heat 3 minutes longer. Stir in cashews and butter. Microwave on high for 30-60 seconds or until mixture turns a light amber (mixture will be very hot). Quickly stir in baking soda and vanilla until light and foamy. Immediately pour onto a greased baking sheet and spread with a metal spatula. Chill for 20 minutes or until set; break into small pieces. Store in an airtight container.

Yield: ¾ pound

CASHEW CHICKEN CASSEROLE **Plan ahead...start the night before**

- 2 c. uncooked elbow macaroni
- 3 c. cubed cooked chicken
- ½ c. cubed processed American cheese
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ½ c. chopped celery
- ½ c. chopped green pepper
- 1 can (8 ounces) sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 can (10-¾ oz.) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1 can (10-¾ oz.) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 1-⅓ c. milk
- 1 can (14½ oz.) chicken broth
- ¼ c. butter or margarine, melted
- ⅔ c. crushed saltines (about 20 crackers)
- ¾ c. cashew halves

In a greased 13-in. x 9-in. x 2-in. baking dish, layer the first seven ingredients in the order listed. In a bowl, combine the soups, milk and broth. Pour over water chestnuts. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Toss butter and cracker crumbs; sprinkle over casserole. Top with cashews. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until macaroni is tender.

Yield: 6 servings.



The use of trade names in this publication is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product names and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

Sincerely,

Linda K. Bowman, R.D., L.D.
Extension Agent IV
Family & Consumer Sciences
Santa Rosa County

LKB:etc

